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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

Vision, investment, implementation: gender equality and the empowerment of women

The persistence of gender inequality is the greatest contributing factor to girls' and women's disempowerment, as is witnessed in the "feminization of poverty", the increasing feminization of migration and increased trafficking of girls and women. In its resolution 54/4, the Commission on the Status of Women, expressed its concern about the increasing feminization of poverty and noted the growing body of evidence demonstrating that investing in women and girls has a multiplier effect on productivity, efficiency and sustained economic growth and that increasing women's economic empowerment is central to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to the eradication of poverty.

What is stifling our action if we recognize the negative reality before us and have some awareness of the solution? Could it be that we have lost sight of the higher ideals set out in the Millennium Declaration, namely, to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective ways to combat poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate development that is truly sustainable?

We suggest that addressing the evidence of girls' and women's disempowerment solely through the lens of economics is actually losing sight of the higher ideals of gender equality. What is required is a vision of the transformation of social relations and, in this transformation, the norms of equality and social solidarity will prevail.

As long as girls and women continue to live in a world where they are oppressed in cultures based on power, male privilege, male dominance and patriarchy, there will be a continual erosion of human rights and a perpetuation of gender discrimination and inequality expressed in increasing levels of poverty, gender-based violence and human trafficking. Gender equality and equitable power relations must be experienced by all persons, both women and men, for change to occur. The human rights of each person as called for in the Charter of the United Nations must be respected. When this happens, political will to allocate resources becomes imperative. Concrete actions must be taken to bring about this transformation:

- Implement coherent human-rights-based national policies that explicitly denounce gender inequality and its perpetuation as a violation of girls' and women's human rights
- Strengthen community educational programmes that address gender inequality, patriarchy and male privilege and have zero tolerance for any form of gender discrimination
- Enforce existing laws relating to gender-based violence, including domestic violence, discrimination, sexual exploitation, prostitution and human trafficking
- Adopt a holistic approach to women's empowerment that links social policies and economics, informal and formal economies, as well as unpaid and paid work

- Continue to invest in girls and women through social expenditure on education and health
- Finance immediately and implement the Millennium Development Goals in every country without exception